TL 568C

Brief curriculum on Yeni Rosa Damayanti

Yeni Damayanti studied Biology at the Universitas Nasional in Jakarta and became quite involved in environmental affairs. She was among the founder members of *SKEPHI*, the Forest Conservation Network and *INFIGHT*, the Indonesian Front for the Defence of Human Rights. Through activities of these two organisations Yeni became a wellknown environment and human rights activist. Yeni was very much on the foreground during a landconflict in *Koto Panjang*, Sumatra, which became a major issue in 1992.

She is also founder and one of the leading members of *FAMI*, the Action Front of Indonesian Students. *FAMI*, an umbrella organisation for student activists from all parts of Indonesia emerged strongly during the presidential elections of 1993. On 14 December 1993 *FAMI* organised a large demonstration demanding that the government accept responsibility for violent incidents such as *Haur Koneng, Nipah* and *Santa Cruz.* The banners, amongst others read: *Drag Suharto before an extraordinary session of the People's Congress* and *Where is the President's responsiblity ?*. During the demonstration 21 students, Yeni included, were arrested by the security forces.

In April 1994 Yeni Damayanti stood trial for insulting the president. In a powerful defence, cheered by students on the public tribune, she attacked the use by the army of the security approach which has been the cause of so much bloodshed. the intervention of security forces in civilian affairs was also strongly attacked by Yeni. She received a s sentence of ten months and was released from prison on 15 December 1994. Her first words outside prison were: *"I'm leaving the small prison now, entering the big prison*" (i.e. Indonesia).

Interview with Yeni after her release

What are your immediate plans ?
It will be the same. To continue my previous activities. I maybe need a little time to adjust myself again. But it is clear that I will not retreat from the movement.

Where there mistakes in the action strategy which landed you in jail?
No, it was really unpredictable. In the present political conditions of Indonesia, one never knows when he/she will be arrested, under what grounds, where and when. It is really difficult to assess. Like the 14 December (1993) demonstration, actually we already made a calculated strategy. The issue was indeed quite sensitive, directly towards *er-i satu* (from RI 1, Republik Indonesia Number One, meaning the president, ed.) and in particular attacking at the security approach which directly effects the presence of the military. But we raised the matter in a place, the National Parliament, where never before arrests have taken place against demonstrators. We didn't expect that our actions in Parliament would end in arrests by the military. If we demonstrate in front of Ministeries or on the streets, every moment we can be arrested - we know that.

What kind of experiences did you get from prison?
Foremost, in prison I realised in full extent that in Indonesia there is no such thing as security under the law *(kepastian hukum)*.

In prison we witness everything, from the police, the prosecution up to the judge, they all play with the laws to the extent it cannot be forgiven anymore. The sentence somebody will get depends for a great deal on the amount of money he/she gives for the police, prosecutor and judge. This is a bare fact.

I learned how the prosecutor haggles with the defendant about the bribe on the duration of the prison sentence - how the prosecutor is chasing up the defendant to the prison or home to discuss the money matter. How we can make a deal with the police to make evidence disappear and make some charges against defendants also disappear.

Outside the prison I only heard about these matters, but inside the prison I witnessed these matters directly. Indonesia isn't at all a country with a Rule of Law. [*Independen*, No. 10, 10 January 1995].

POSTSCRIPT

YENI DAMAYANTI ARRIVED IN LISBON ON 21 MARCH TO ATTEND THE 6TH SYMPOSIUM ON EAST TIMOR AND INDONESIA, ORGANISED BY THE OPORTO UNIVERSITY. SHE APPEARED IN PUBLIC BY GIVING INTERVIEWS FOR NEWSPAPER AND RADIO. SHE WILL ALSO ATTEND SEVERAL MEETINGS IN HANOVER, GERMANY, ON THE EVE OF PRESIDENT SUHARTO'S VISIT TO THAT COUNTRY. YENI DAMAYANTI IS A VERY COURAGEOUS PERSON AND HER OUTSPOKENNESS HAS CREATED DIFFICULTIES FOR HER WITH THE INDONESIAN AUTHORITIES.
BECAUSE OF HER VULNERABLE POSITION AS EX POLITICAL PRISONER, WE APPEAL FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION FOR HER SAFETY WHEN SHE ARRIVES BACK IN INDONESIA.

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